

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KINSHA 04777 151120Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 INRE-00 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 SCS-06 PER-01
FBOE-00 OPR-02 A-01 /081 W
-----103752 151135Z /20

O 151050Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9676
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
USICA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 4777

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG, CASC
SUBJECT: SHABA ATTACK: US PRESS TREATMENT OF MILITARY SITUATION

REF: STATE 122789

1. IT WAS NO SURPRISE WHEN MOBUTU TELEPHONED ME EARLY MAY 15 TO COMPLAIN IN STRIDENT TERMS ABOUT SEVERAL EUROPEAN PRESS REPORTS, ALLEGEDLY SOURCED TO STATE DEPT. SPOKESMAN, CLAIMING THAT MUTSHATSHA AND KOLWEZI HAD BOTH FALLEN TO THE ENEMY. ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER HAD ONLY A FEW MINUTES BEFORE CALLED MY ATTENTION TO THE MUTSHATSHA REPORT.

2. MOBUTU RECALLED ALL THE PROBLEMS WE HAD HAD DURING LAST YEAR'S INVASION CONCERNING US GOVERNMENT'S APPARENT COMPULSION TO TALK ABOUT THE MILITARY SITUATION ON THE GROUND. NOW, ALMOST THE FIRST DAY OF THE CURRENT CRISIS, WE WERE DOING THE SAME THING. NOT ONLY WAS IT FALSE THAT EITHER KOLWEZI OR MUTSHATSHA HAD FALLEN, MOBUTU WENT ON, BUT SUCH REPORTS SOURCED TO OFFICIAL US SOURCES COULD BE OF IMMENSE HELP TO ZAIRE'S ENEMIES NOW PRESSING THE ATTACK.

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3. I SAID I SHARED MOBUTU'S CONCERN ON THIS POINT, REMINDING HIM, HOWEVER, THAT WE COULD EXPECT CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC INTEREST IN SHABA DEVELOPMENTS, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE PRESENCE OF AMERICANS IN THAT AREA. I SAID I WAS SURE THE DEPARTMENT WOULD DO ALL IT COULD NOT TO DISCUSS MILITARY DETAILS OR IN ANY OTHER WAY UNDERMINE THE GOZ'S DEFENSE OPERATIONS. IN THAT CONNECTION,

I TOLD MOBUTU I HAD JUST RECEIVED MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT (REFTEL) STATING EVERY EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO AVOID GETTING INTO ACTUAL DETAILS OF MILITARY SITUATION IN HANDLING PRESS QUERIES.

4. COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED: AS DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL FROM LAST YEAR, MOBUTU IS VERY SENSITIVE ON THIS POINT--AND UNDERSTANDABLY SO. I AM UNAWARE OF ANY OFFICIAL US STATEMENT RE FALL OF MUTSHATSHA, ALTHOUGH VOA THIS MORNING DID QUOTE STATE DEPT. AS SAYING "IT HAD INFORMATION THAT KOLWEZI IS IN REBEL HANDS." AS DEPTM AWARE FROM OUR REPORTING, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IS ENTIRELY CORRECT, AND WE HAVE NO INFORMATION THAT MUTSHATSHA HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY ATTACKED. SUGGEST THAT AT MAY 15 BRIEFING, DEPT. SPOKESMAN FIND WAY OF CORRECTING ANY INACCURATE INFORMATION WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN DISSEMINATED OVER WEEKEND AND MAKE POINT THAT WE DO NOT WISH TO GO INTO DETAILS OF ONGOING MILITARY SITUATION. IT WILL ALSO BE IMPORTANT THAT MISSION BE KEPT FULLY AND CURRENTLY INFORMED OF ALL USG COMMENTS ON SHABA SO THAT WE CAN COPE WITH GOZ REACTIONS HERE.
CUTLER

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